



Henry L. Ingwersen  
Senator, District 32

THE MAINE SENATE  
131st Legislature

3 State House Station  
Augusta, Maine 04333

January 22, 2024

*Testimony of Senator Henry Ingwersen presenting*  
**LD 2093, “An Act to Address Food Insecurity by Helping Maine Residents Access Locally Produced Food”**

Thank you, Chair Pluecker and Esteemed Members of the Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry Committee. I am before you today to introduce and give my support to LD 2093, An Act to Address Food Insecurity by Helping Maine Residents Access Locally Produced Foods.

This bill, if enacted, will provide ongoing funding for an existing program within the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry’ - the Fund to Address Food Insecurity and Provide Nutrition Incentives. This nutrition incentive program, provided with a one-time state appropriation in 2023, gives low-income shoppers who use SNAP or EBT bonus bucks when they buy local produce from Maine farms. Nutrition incentive programs like Maine Harvest Bucks & Farm Fresh Rewards are an investment in public health & local economic resilience. Currently, over 90 locations across Maine run these programs in all 16 counties.

LD 2093 will help these programs grow their impact - benefitting more farms and more people facing food insecurity. Secured, ongoing state funding is necessary for these programs to exist, grow, and continue. This is such an effective program because the benefits are multi-faceted:

- **Matching Funds from the Federal Government:**
  - LD 2093 funds leverage federal dollars at 3:1. For every \$1 Maine invests, we’re getting \$1-\$2 from the Federal Government in SNAP, and \$1-\$2 from a matching USDA grant.
- **Benefits to local economies; farmers and local food producers:**
  - These programs direct SNAP sales to local producers, where the money stays in our local economy.
  - In 2022, there was \$1.2 million in additional sales at over 90 farmers’ markets, farm stands, and small stores.
  - At some markets, 20-30% of farmer sales come from SNAP & Maine Harvest Bucks. Thus, this program is boosting farm viability and helping markets grow. When farmers’ markets grow and add new vendors, they’re supporting small business development in their communities.

*Chair, Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee \* Health and Human Services Committee*  
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*Proudly representing Senate District 32: Arundel, Biddeford, Dayton, Hollis, Lyman*



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- **Benefits to low-income Mainers:**
  - **Emergency Food Reliance** - Local surveys show that these programs reduce people's need for food pantries and the emergency food system.
  - **Health** - Nationwide studies show that people who participate in nutrition incentive programs eat more fruits and vegetables than the average American.
  - **DIGNITY** - 12%+ of Mainers use SNAP to buy food. When farmers' markets offer Maine Harvest Bucks, they're welcoming these families, seniors, people with disabilities, and other people facing disadvantages. These shoppers have the dignity to enjoy the farmers' markets and use their food budget there. This also helps foster community connection and fight isolation and loneliness that challenges many rural Maine communities.
  - **Health Outcomes** - People with low incomes are more likely to experience diet-related, preventable illnesses. We're saving money and resources on downstream healthcare costs when people eat healthier diets.
  
- **Climate Change Goals & Community Resiliency**
  - LD 2093 is an investment in community resilience in the face of climate change and economic uncertainty. Maine is at the end of the distribution chain for many big box grocers. Any disturbance in the global food economy will be felt harder here, as was demonstrated by the pandemic.
  - Maine farmers' markets create local food access points in over 90 communities across Maine. These markets support the livelihoods of over 400 farms and food businesses and the thousands of Mainers they employ.
  - Farmers' markets are an important part of Maine's local food system. They help cultivate new farm & food businesses. Many farms rely on farmers' markets for the majority of their income.
  - Maine's Climate Action Plan (Strategy D) aims for 30% local food being consumed in Maine by 2030. Ongoing funding for the Fund to Address Food Insecurity and Provide Nutrition Incentives will help us to meet this goal.

As you can see, ongoing funding for this program is important: important for Maine farmers, food producers, and vendors; important for low-income Maine families and seniors; and important in helping to meet our climate change goals in Maine. I hope you will join me in supporting LD 2093. I'm happy to try to answer your questions, but there are folks coming after me that may be better qualified to do that. Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Henry Ingwersen'.

Henry Ingwersen  
State Senator, District 32

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